

Date: January 14, 2021
To: Town of Arlington Select Board
From: Dallin Elementary School
Subject: Dallin School Safe Arrival/Dismissal "School Street" Pilot Program

Memorandum

1. Executive Summary

This memo presents a proposed pilot program to improve the safety of students during arrival and dismissal times at Dallin Elementary School. In the fall of 2020, the principal of Dallin Elementary School, Thad Dingman, solicited help from the regional Safe Routes to School (SRTS) coordinator, Judy Crocker, for observations and recommendations on improving safety, and came to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) for logistical support from the Town in implementing a new Arrival and Dismissal Plan. The leadership at Dallin Elementary School has been meeting with Ms. Crocker, TAC, and the Arlington Police Department (APD) to develop a new Arrival and Dismissal Plan that is based around the "School Street" model of diverting car traffic away from the school entrance and allowing only buses, bikes and pedestrians on the street in front of Dallin. We welcome any questions and request your approval of the plan as outlined below.

2. Background

Despite all efforts to create a culture of safety, Dallin school has consistently heard from parents and observed instances in which the traffic conditions at arrival and dismissal are unsafe; a number of collisions in front of Dallin that resulted in property damage and near misses involving cars and students have prompted the school community to seek new remedies before serious injuries occur.

Adding to the disorder each day, the later start time at the Gibbs School necessitated their bus being parked in the pull-out lane in front of Dallin and actively loading/unloading students at the same time students at Dallin are arriving/departing. In previous years, the bus departed earlier, and this pull out was staffed by adult and student volunteers to help students safely and quickly exit vehicles.

Ms. Crocker conducted several site visits in November 2020 to observe student arrival and dismissal and used the Safe Routes to School best practices to draft a proposal for a safer student arrival and dismissal. Several pieces must be coordinated with the town, including closing Florence Avenue between George and Renfrew Streets to all vehicles, except school buses, for about 30 minutes at arrival and dismissal times. Ms. Crocker and Principal Dingman reached out to TAC's school committee liaison, Laura Swan, and the senior transportation planner, Daniel Amstutz, to assist in coordinating with the branches of town government to help change the traffic patterns around Dallin School. A TAC working group met with representatives from Dallin and Ms. Crocker to observe the arrival and dismissal traffic patterns and understand the scope of the traffic issues.

In June 2021, Dallin school leadership met with the TAC working group and representatives from APD to discuss the new arrival and dismissal plan and agreed to implement a trial period to evaluate the impacts on the school and neighborhood. On August 26, 2021, Dallin School reached out to neighbors and held a meeting to hear initial public comments and concerns.

3. Existing Conditions

Dallin School is oriented towards Florence Avenue between George Street and Florence Field. During the observation period, most of Dallin School's 472 students walked in the mornings; nearly one-third arrived by car. At afternoon dismissal, the number of walkers and riders was nearly even. Dallin School has a clear arrival and dismissal policy on its website, indicating where parents can park, queue for drop off, and safely cross the road. There is one traffic supervisor on duty at the corner of George Street and Florence Avenue. In past years, pre-COVID, the drop-off queue for vehicles unloading students was the pull-out lane in front of Dallin on Florence Street. Parent volunteers and trained 5th-grade students would step forward to open the car door and assist children exiting their vehicle. Prior to this year, middle school students also used the pull out in front of Dallin School to catch a school bus over to Gibbs Middle School.

Ms. Crocker and the Traffic Supervisor on duty have observed, "Excessive vehicle idling, student jaywalking, U-turns and three-point turns." Most parents/guardians did adhere to the arrival and dismissal plans, but there also were some students exiting from the "wrong" side of the vehicle into traffic or not wearing seatbelts. Some vehicles passed school buses while they were loading and unloading students. There also is a long-term issue of vehicles parking illegally along Florence Avenue opposite the school in front of a fire hydrant and blocking driveways, and then children and adults crossing mid-block to enter the school. Traffic cones have been used to mark off illegal parking spaces, but they are often ignored or removed.

4. Proposed Elements

The following recommendations were chosen to address the safety issues at Dallin School and separate the modes of travel from each other (see Figure 2).

- a. Florence Avenue directly in front of Dallin
 - i. Between Renfrew and George Streets, restrict use of Florence Avenue to school buses and abutters for one block during school arrival and dismissal times.
 - ii. Portable barriers with affixed signs saying "DO NOT ENTER EXCEPT BUSES" would be stored on school grounds and deployed by the custodial staff.
 1. The barriers would go into place by 8:00 a.m. and be removed at 8:30 once students have entered the building. At dismissal, the barriers would be put in place for approximately 30 minutes from 2:15 on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and 12:45 on Tuesday.
 2. If the pilot proves successful, permanent signs would be installed similar to others near elementary schools in town that may include ones like: "Right Turn Only During Arrival/Dismissal Hours" signage on Renfrew at Florence Streets and on Florence at George Street. Similarly, "Left Turn Only During Arrival/Dismissal" signage will be needed on Florence at Renfrew Street and at George at Florence Street.

-
- iii. Create a drop-off area on the west side of Florence Avenue, along Florence Field, extending from Waverly to Renfrew Street. Install signs similar to those at other Arlington schools (see Figure 3) that read “No Parking, Drop Off Only”.
 - b. Update old signage around Dallin School.
 - i. Replace faded “No Parking Anytime” signage in the fire lane on George Street (see Figure 4).
 - ii. Add Staff Parking signage to the lot behind Dallin similar to those at other Arlington schools (see Figure 5).
 - c. Make George Street one-way from Florence Avenue to Rhinecliff Street.
 - d. Add a traffic supervisor to the Florence and Renfrew intersection.

5. Evaluation of the Pilot Program

Following approval from the Select Board, Dallin’s pilot program would begin on Monday, February 28, once all signage and barriers have been acquired and will run through the end of the school year. In late April, our committee will meet to examine key areas of concern and assess the pilot. At the end of the year, our committee will do the following:

- 1) Host a follow-up meeting inviting community members and school abutters to gather feedback and share lessons learned.
- 2) Review feedback, explore advantages and disadvantages, and refine our proposal, if necessary, to bring back to the Select Board to receive authorization to make these changes permanent. We hope this would include support for making the additional traffic supervisor at the Florence and Renfrew intersection a permanent position.
- 3) Assess the impact of detoured traffic that will detour around the school onto side streets. TAC hired a firm to count the number of vehicles and measure speeds on the nearest parallel street, Oakland Ave, between Renfrew and George Streets. When the pilot program is in place, they can come and repeat their counts in the same location. Hopefully this will help measure the vehicular traffic using the detour away from Florence Avenue because of the new traffic pattern. Dallin’s committee will take this information into account as we review the program information and feedback.

Thank you for considering our proposal. I look forward to reviewing it with the Select Board members in January.

Sincerely,

Thad Dingman
Principal
Dallin Elementary School

<Insert letter of support from Dr. Homan>

January 5, 2022

Select Board
Town of Arlington
730 Massachusetts Avenue
Arlington, MA 02476

Members of the Select Board,

On behalf of the Dallin School Council, I am writing to endorse the proposed plan for improving arrival/dismissal safety at Dallin Elementary School. For more than four years, student safety at arrival and dismissal has been among the top concerns of our community, expressed through annual family surveys and individual communications with staff, administrators, and parent representatives.

In response to feedback in our 2018 Family Survey, Dallin's 2018-2019 School Improvement Plan included improving arrival and dismissal safety as a priority area. It has continued as a priority in each SIP since then. Dallin staff and administrators have regularly communicated safety policies, encouraged adherence, and made adjustments. Yet despite these efforts, the Dallin School community, independent observers, and local officials continue to identify and express concerns around traffic-related safety, most notably associated with arrival/dismissal.

We are pleased with the proposed pilot plan, which incorporates best practices from the Commonwealth's Safe Routes to School program. We encourage the Select Board to vote in support of the plan's Spring 2022 implementation and bring Dallin's safety measures up to a similar standard as other Arlington schools. We appreciate your endorsement and look forward to continued support as we work to provide safe streets for our most vulnerable populations.

Sincerely,



Tracy Van Dorpe
Co-Chair, Dallin School Council

Figure 1 - [Current Arrival/Dismissal Plan](#)

Current Dallin Arrival & Dismissal Plan



Figure 2 - [Proposed Arrival/Dismissal Plan](#)

Dallin Arrival & Dismissal Plan

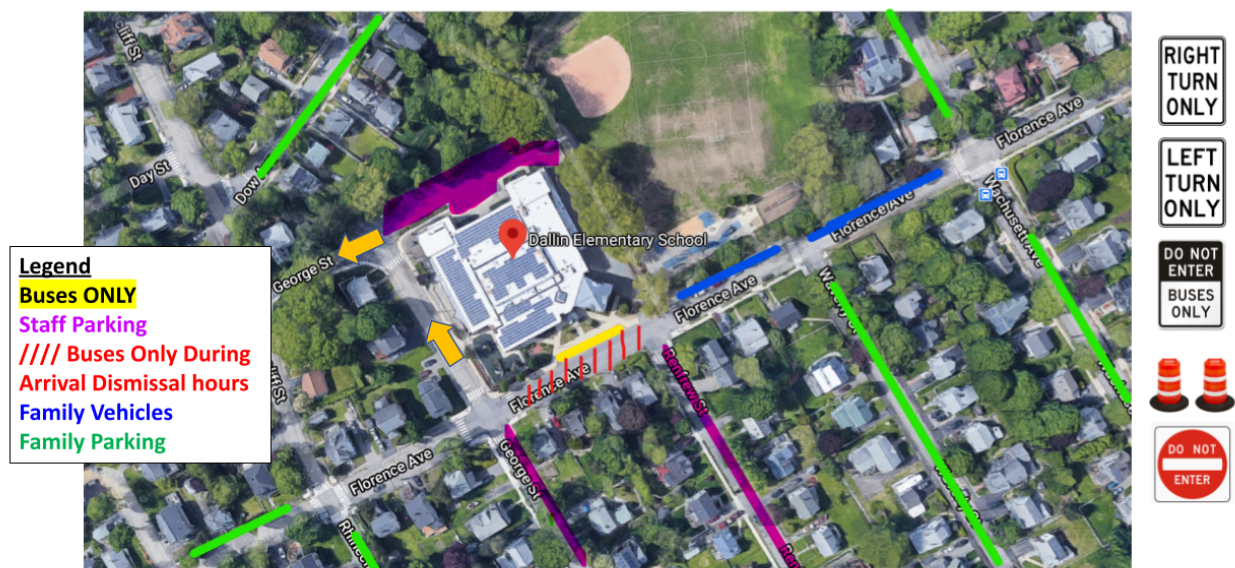


Figure 3

Example Drop-off Zone Signage:

Stratton Elementary School

300' Drop-off Zone on Pheasant Avenue
"DROP-OFF ONLY NO PARKING"
7:45am-3:30pm MON-FRI"



Bishop Elementary School

300' Drop-off Zone on Columbia Road
"DROP-OFF ONLY NO PARKING"



Bishop Elementary School

200' Drop-off Zone on Crosby Street
"DROP-OFF ONLY NO PARKING"



Hardy Elementary School

500' Drop-off Zone on Chandler Street

"DROP-OFF PICK UP ONLY

7:45am-8:45am 1:45pm-2:45pm

NO PARKING"



Figure 4

Faded Signage:

Dallin Elementary School

Faded "NO PARKING ANY TIME"
signage on George Street fire lane.



Figure 5

Example Signage

Thompson Elementary School

"STAFF PARKING ONLY"

signage on North Union Street.

